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THE PROBLEM OF THE BALTIC STATES

By Kaarel R. Pusta

The problem of the political future of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, though limited in scope, is in some respects of fundamental importance to the post-war world. "It involves a potential clash in principles, the solution of which bears heavily upon the policy of the United Nations", wrote Hans Rothfels in July, 1944, in the Journal of Central European Affairs.

Indeed, one of the difficulties at the abortive Ministers' Conference in London last fall concerned the status of citizens of the Baltic States now displaced in Germany. The New York Times of October 5 reported:

> "Mr. Molotov claimed that any person who lived in territory now claimed by the Russians, including Lithuanians, Estonians, Latvians and Poles were 'Russian' and should be repatriated by force if necessary. Britain, France and the United States held that such people should have the right to choose their citizenship. No agreement was reached."

On October 6, Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, United States prosecutor of German war criminals, stated that in signing the bill of indictment, in which reference is made to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other territories as being within the area of the U.S.S.R., he was not recognizing, on behalf of the United States, Russian claims to those territories. "This language", he explained, "is proposed by Russia and is accepted to avoid delay which would have been occasioned by the insistence on an alteration in the text."

And, according to a London dispatch of October 19 to the New York Times, the British Foreign Office similarly declared that the British signature on the indictments of Germans did not imply recognition of the Baltic States as Soviet territory.

Whether or not it was wise to describe these countries as Soviet territory merely in an "accommodating spirit", as a British official said, and then make formal reservations, is questionable. It remains clear, however, that Moscow did not get

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the recognition of the Baltic "Soviet Socialist Republics" by dint of the Nuremberg trials.

II

Public concern was recently aroused in Sweden and elsewhere by the decision of the Swedish Government to hand over to Russia 167 Baltic refugees who escaped to Sweden in German uniforms immediately after the end of the war. Of these persons, 57 were minors, 16 to 19 years of age. As this question also raised fundamental issues for Sweden, it was discussed in an extraordinary session of the Riksdag.

There it was disclosed that in June the Foreign Relations Commission was informed by the Government that internees in German uniforms would be delivered to the Inter-allied Military Commission and not to the Soviets. The unfortunate utterance of Foreign Minister Unden, that the fight of Baltic patriots for independence is only a political illusion, was criticized by representatives in the Riksdag as well as by newspapers. Some expressed apprehension that Mr. Unden's declaration might be used one day against Sweden itself.

Spiritual leaders, with Pope Pius XII, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishops of Sweden at their head, expressed their commiseration. Neither this nor the personal intervention of King Gustav sufficed to change Russia's claim. And the moral uneasiness of the Swedish people could not have been lightened by Prime Minister Hansson's statement that: "In lieu of a German authority, the occupying powers must be regarded as the receiving authorities for military refugees."

During the German occupation the Nazi authorities ordered all males from 18 to 35 in the Baltic States to report for "labor service" and then confronted them with the choice of either serving in the "labor battalions" and other auxiliary services, or of joining the German Army. This compulsory mobilization, in violation of international law, was certainly not unknown to the Swedish Government. And the Baltic refugees, for their part, were not aware of the secret recognition by the Swedish Government of the Russian annexation of the Baltic States in 1940. This was disclosed before the Swedish Parliament by Mr. Günther, former Foreign Minister, only

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in April, 1945.

When Mr. Hansson insisted that "any suggestion of differentiating the occupying powers must be vigorously rejected" and that his Government "has the right to take for granted that the deportees will be treated as prisoners of war according to established customs", he was presumably overlooking the fact that the American and British occupying powers do not consider Baltic soldiers as Soviet citizens.

There is also equivocation in the reference to the "established customs" of Soviet Russia. Baltic internees who decided in favor of suicide, in preference to deportation, knew what these "customs" meant to them.

III

In September, 1944, when the Russians started their drive into the Baltic countries, people fled from their homes in any direction except that of Russia.

The German occupation had been painful and humiliating; the Russian occupation in 1940-41 was odious. The favorite refuge for the Baltic peoples was Sweden. But relatively few escaped there and it is estimated that more than 10,000 perished during the crossing of the stormy sea in small boats, hunted by the Germans and Russians alike.

An estimated 200,000 are now in Western Germany, Austria, France and Denmark, plus over 30,000 in Sweden and some thousands in Switzerland and Italy. Of these refugees, 75 per cent are "working people". The great majority have so far obstinately refused to return to their "liberated" homelands.

Why is it that even Baltic and Polish Jews, the most atrociously persecuted by the Nazis, refuse to go back and that, in spite of poor living conditions in the American occupation zone of Germany, "up to several thousand" Jews are crossing into it from the Russian zone each month?

Escaped from the Nazi terror and exploitation system, these unfortunate people don't want to be the victims of another régime which has set up slave labor as a principle of the state economy and which denies all individual liberties to the human being.

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IV

The United States, Britain and 43 other States of the free world have never recognized the incorporation of the Baltic States as carried out by Russian occupation and the subterfuge of "elections" in 1940. This for a good reason. Said Lenin:

> "If a small or weak nation is not accorded the right to decide the form of its political existence by a free vote -- implying the complete withdrawal of the troops of the incorporating or merely strong nation -- then the incorporation is an annexation, i.e. an arbitrary appropriation of a foreign country, an act of violence . . ." (Collected Works, Vol. XXII, p.13).

The declaration of the Crimea Conference provided that the United States, the United Kingdom and the U.S.S.R. will "jointly" assist the peoples in any European liberated State to establish conditions of internal peace, to carry out emergency measures for relief, to form interim governments and to facilitate the holding of free and unfettered elections.

Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians wonder why an Allied control should not be established in their "liberated" countries in order to guarantee that their citizens should not be deported, that all political prisoners should be released and that all the Baltic citizens detained in Russia should be returned home. Civil liberties should be restored in the Baltic countries and free access given for United Nations representatives, relief officials and newspaper correspondents.

Broadly representative interim governments should lead these countries to new, free and truly democratic elections after the withdrawal of Russian occupation troops and administration. Still members of the League of Nations, free Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania should now be admitted into the United Nations Organization. Thus the "Baltic Riddle" would be solved.

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Dr. Pusta, the author of this article, was Foreign Minister of Estonia in 1924-25 and formerly represented his country at the League of Nations and in other diplomatic posts. The author of several studies on Baltic questions and problems of European Union, he has been a resident of the United States since October, 1940.

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NOT MERELY GOSSIP

A Supplement to HUMAN EVENTS Vol. III - No. 2

The opinion that Secretary Byrnes made his "Munich-in-Moscow" to advance his own political fortunes is gaining wider currency. Last week this column quoted an important Democratic figure to that effect. This week we find that some Republican circles are also convinced that Byrnes is trying to gain the support, for his presidential candidacy in 1948, of the Democratic Left by appeasing Moscow on foreign policy. These Republicans, however, go further. They claim that Byrnes did not, of his own volition, take a "stiff" stand at the London Conference last October; that he then favored giving in to Molotov when the latter would not yield. At that point, John Foster Dulles, whom Byrnes called his "Republican partner" at the Conference, served warning that if it was decided to appease Russia, he would make public a minority and opposing report. Byrnes, frightened of such a prospect, had to stand firm.

When the Moscow Conference was being planned, Byrnes evidently was determined that he should not again suffer from the restraining presence of Dulles. He did not invite him to Moscow and forestalled any Republican criticism by spreading the word that he did not intend to negotiate any agreements. Very slick, say these Republicans. But it has not so far been noticeable that the Republican Party has taken any stand against the Moscow agreements.

The British reaction, which is adverse to the Moscow agreements, is --surprisingly -- led by Lord Vansittart, formerly pro-Russian and apostle of the hard peace for Germany. Vansittart puts the blame on Byrnes, calls him "naive" and acuses him of saying "farewell not only to fair play, but also to firmness", at the same time absolving Bevin -- "he had to go to Moscow, perhaps against his better judgment". Other things Vansittart said: "The Russians gained everything and gave practically nothing in return. . . . After the mighty have drafted the treaties [of peace], all those who really helped win the war may consider them -- after, not before. We old hands know what that means. Terms are hard to alter when they have ceased to be fluid. . . . Whose is the fault? It was Russia's wish and the democracies yielded in a moment evil for mankind -- and therefore, ultimately for Russia. . . . In the Far East Russia won again. . . . The Big Three are tending to become the Big Two, or even the Big One. It is time to cry halt."

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General Marshall has evidently reflected upon the unpleasant experiences of his predecessor as Ambassador to China, Pat Hurley, who insisted that some State Department officials were at cross purposes with him. The new Ambassador has placed two trusted Regular Army officers, known as "Marshall men", in the Far Eastern Section of the State Department to check all correspondence between that section and the Embassy in Chungking. Additionally, General Marshall has brought to his Embassy five War Department stenographers whom he knows to be reliable.

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"The Little Man Who Doesn't Know" -- In one day, January 8, President Truman said: (1) That we had recognized the dictator Government in Yugoslavia only "conditionally". [The State Department, queried immediately after Truman's statement, said we had recognized Yugoslavia unconditionally.] (2) That he had not opposed the setting up of a Control Commission in Japan -- a provision in the Moscow Agreements which he now backs. [Consultation of the White House Press Conference transcripts shows that President Truman did oppose a Control Commission on September 26, 1945.] (3) That UNRRA is feeding the German people. [UNRRA of course does not, cannot, feed the Germans.]

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Justice Jackson, now Prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials, is reportedly very anxious to return home and apparently resents the delays of judicial procedure now that he has made his case and secured the publicity attendant thereon. But the Trial judges insist that Jackson remain to the end, in accordance with judicial practice.

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The War Trials, say English sources, have lost sight of their two fundamental purposes: (1) To bring home to the German people the depth of Nazi guilt; and (2) simultaneously to reveal the extent of the German underground movement. As head of OSS, Colonel "Bill" Donovan vainly endeavored to persuade Jackson to try to trap the Nazi leaders into incriminating each other and to strengthen German democracy by disclosing the number of prominent Germans who fought the Nazi movement from within, risking their lives to give OSS information which served considerably to shorten the war. Instead, the actual tactics followed by the prosecution have made anti-Nazi Germans feel that, in American eyes, they are as guilty as the members of Hitler's inner circle. In consequence, the latter are coming to be regarded in Germany as martyrs to an American revenge complex.

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One striking contradiction of American foreign policy appeared last week in the State Department radio broadcast on Latin American affairs, by Ellis Briggs, which said, "The idea that we must have unanimity before we can act together is not in accord with practical reality. . . . No international association could prosper if its member nations were denied the right to express their opinions or to seek agreement among themselves on necessary action to be taken. And I like to emphasize again that such action need not be unanimous."

Foreign diplomats noted the astonishing clash between this utterance and the fact that in the United Nations Organization any one of the Big Five can veto any proposal; and that Mr. Byrnes at Moscow has just extended the unanimity principle to the control of Japan, much against the advice of General MacArthur. Foreign circles immediately pointed out how confusing it will be for foreign chancelleries to try to interpret the principles behind American policies.

This State Department broadcast was made in an effort to bolster the recent proposal of Uruguay — to establish a system of collective action of the Governments of the Americas against any one of them (obviously Argentina is meant) which has a domestic policy "prejudicial to peace". Mr. Spruille Braden, Assistant Secretary of State and recently Ambassador to Argentina, praised the Uruguayan proposal. These speeches are apparently intended to try to win over other Latin American Governments who have been generally quite cool to the Uruguay plan. Even in that country, the sentiment is by no means unanimous in its favor as may be seen in the fact that the measure passed the Uruguayan Senate by only one vote. Suspicion deepens that the State Department inspired Uruguay to make the proposal.

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Joe Martin's wisecrack on being asked what his policy would be if the 1946 elections should elevate him from Minority to Majority leader, in the House: "I would open every legislative day with a prayer, and close it with a probe."

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It is not true that Jews unanimously favor a revenge policy for Germany. The distinguished Berlin Rabbi, Dr. Leo Baeck, has arrived in this country and has given an interview to the New York Staatszeitung in which he said, "I have no more ardent wish than to render thanks to those Germans who, during the years of Nazi horrors, have been good to me and to other Jews". The New York Neue Volkszeitung, Social Democratic German-language paper, in an editorial entitled "Rabbi Against Revenge Policy", reported, "Dr. Baeck complained about the passivity of the German intellectuals who, with few exceptions, did not say one word to express their horror of the Nazi crimes. This does not prevent him, however, from wishing the German people a happy and democratic future and from opposing energetically all attempts at splitting up Germany. At a meeting of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee he advocated that we make sure that the German people have enough food." Additionally, Charles S. Zimmerman of the Jewish Labor Committee says that the problem of the future of German economy "is in very real sense at the heart of the problem of the future of Europe". He contended that only "disaster" could result from the creation of an "industrial vacuum" in that country.

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